

## Flight to Finland – Bob Beagrie

The sun, out of the window of the plane, sets  
my numb nerves atingle with fire as it sinks

into a sea of cloud 36500 feet above the Baltic  
turning the vapour-scape into molten undulations

throbbing with barely contained eruption; a detail  
from John Martin's Sodom & Gomorrah, the fire-eye

burning through empty space of the stratosphere,  
my cheek blushing, my upheld fingers stained red;

yesterday a young girl walking past the foot  
of the staircase in The Ship Inn, Saltburn, casually

announced, "There's a ghost at the top of them stair,"  
and I resisted the urge to glance up at the apparition,

almost saying "Yes, and one at the bottom too,"  
and one speaking, and writing now, and another reading

and the sun floating on the crust of cloud is already  
eight minutes dead - an image of Lemminkainen

floundering into the turmoil of the black river  
to be torn apart by all of the ferocity that lies

beneath the surface tension:

the political sharks, pike and piranha  
the birthing cries, the weeping trees  
the dancing ripples, the burning bridges  
of clasped hands, monuments to unbridled  
ambition, the bridges made from sweat  
the houses of faith and their opposite  
(which is also faith), the bridges fashioned  
from sighs and shrugs, the rope bridges  
full of shall-knots running over the heads  
of crocs with their grins ready to strip  
flesh and light from bone, take on  
digest and transform the energy

and within this time of suspension in thinned air  
as darkness comes on and the sun's searing glare

becomes a blood stain on the cloud-lake's sloughed skin  
I close my eyes to ask, what marvels shall we make of this?

and wait for the pilot to announce the beginning  
of our descent into the gravity of our worldly bodies.